

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-28 (Previously Cancelled).

Claim 29 (Currently Amended): A method of playing a slot machine game using a symbol matrix formed by a plurality of rows intersecting with a plurality of columns, with the plurality of rows and columns including a plurality of symbols, comprising:

- a) a player making a wager to play the game;
- b) randomly rearranging the plurality of symbols;
- c) displaying the rearranged symbols in the symbol matrix;
- d) automatically expanding wildcard symbols, if displayed in the symbol matrix, in ~~the one or more~~ all of the predetermined directions associated with each said wildcard symbol;
- e) always replacing the symbol(s) in the path of an expanding wildcard symbol with the expanding wildcard symbol; and
- f) issuing awards for winning symbol combinations following the expansion of all wildcard symbols.

Claim 30 (Original): The method of Claim 29 in which a wildcard symbol is assigned one or more of the following predetermined directions:

- a) upwards from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears;
- b) downwards from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears;
- c) leftwards from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears;
- d) rightwards from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears; or
- 5 e) diagonally from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears.

Claim 31 (Original): The method of Claim 29 in which a wildcard symbol expands N symbol positions, from the symbol position in which the wildcard symbol appears towards the predetermined direction(s) assigned to the wildcard symbol, with N calculated in one of the following manners:

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- a) N is a fixed number;
- b) N is a random number; or
- c) N is a random number selected from a range of numbers.